



# For the Sake of the Trust

The Baker Street Irregulars Trust Newsletter

Spring, 2012

## Tell Us a Story: The BSI Trust's Oral History Project

BY ANDY SOLBERG, BSI

In June of 2007, I received a call from Don Terras, BSI. Don was leading the BSI Oral History Project and asked me if I would interview Phil Sherman, a long-time BSI who lived near me in Baltimore. Phil was an old friend, and I readily agreed. I already knew something about the Project, but Don filled me in on its background and provided me with a very helpful set of directions on how to perform the interview. Don had been a great choice to lead the Project as he was a Senior Lecturer in the Anthropology Department at Northeastern Illinois University. He had great expertise in oral histories, and access to terrific technology.



Even with my meager background, I knew that people come to the BSI differently from each other. Not only does each person bring different accomplishments and expertise to the BSI, each also brings his or her own point of view to their experiences, the memories of their experiences, and the way they express those memories. I also knew that if it weren't for the Oral History Project, the anecdotes, traditions, songs, and information associated with pictures, documents, and other records would be lost forever.

I called Phil and arranged the interview. Phil and I spent a good two hours talking about his life, his early recollections of the BSI, and his years being the "Dean" of the Baltimore Sherlockian community. We talked about the Six Napoleons of Baltimore and the Annual Saturday with Sherlock Holmes at the Pratt Library, which Phil initiated back in 1980 and hosted for more than twenty years.

—continued on page 4

## From the Chair

BY THOMAS J. FRANCIS, BSI

The obituaries published in my local newspaper are typically written by family or friends of the deceased. They mostly consist of summaries of the family tree of the departed, peppered with trite phrases. They begin with some statement like "After a valiant struggle with morbid obesity, Ignatius entered eternal rest...". I found two recent quotes quite amusing. "X died suddenly surrounded by his family." Now did X die in an auto accident where several members of his family were also in the car or was he perhaps smothered with a pillow while the beneficiaries of his will stood around watching? The other quote was, "Z had been predeceased by his mother and father." This reminded me of a Holmes-related quote: "No s---, Sherlock."

The difference between these boilerplate obituaries and those of the average Sherlockian are striking. Because of my position with the Baker Street Irregulars Trust, I am sent an advisory whenever a member of the BSI passes. I then receive links to the various published obituaries. What amazes

—continued on page 2

## In This Issue

<i>Tell Us a Story: The BSI Trust's Oral History Project</i> .....	1
<i>From The Chair</i> .....	1
<i>Gifts to the Treasury</i> .....	5
<i>Added to the Archives</i> .....	6
<i>A Collector Recollects</i> .....	7
<i>The Cardinal Points</i> .....	7
<i>BSI Trust News</i> .....	<i>The Back Page</i>



## From the Chair *—continued from Page 1*

me time after time is how active our people are - not just in the world of Holmes and Watson - but in the real world. So often they have interests beyond Holmes in which they are just as knowledgeable. Many are key players in the field in which they worked professionally. Some have even had multiple careers.

I suppose I should not be surprised because one of the most enjoyable aspects of attending any Sherlockian function is sharing in the broad range of topics that arise during the course of any dinner. I have told both Tom Stix and Mike Whalen that I don't care where I am seated at the BSI Dinner because everyone I meet is interesting. I have always enjoyed the fact that some subject comes up at the table and five of the eight people know an astounding amount about it. Then a new subject bubbles up and, bingo, everybody can speak to that one also. I particularly remember a dinner a few years back where we bounced from the poems of Robert Service to the movies of the Marx Brothers, to code breaking in World War II, and the music of Duke Ellington and Buddy Holly.

I was commenting on this once and someone - I think it was Mickey Fromkin - observed, "it's because we are readers." Clearly the average BSI member reads far more than the average person and in areas well beyond the works of Dr. John H. Watson, blessings be upon him.

With all this varied conversation the subject of what Sherlockians actually do for a living rarely occurs. There is little interest in social or economic status among our members. The only criterion is, "Are you a Sherlockian?" If so, you are accepted. So when someone passes over the Reichenbach and it is disclosed that he had won the Nobel Prize or was a world champion calf roper, I am at first surprised. But then I think, "Well that makes sense."

The Baker Street Irregulars Trust exists so that we can preserve the history of our society and the stories of our members. We desperately strive to capture the correspondence of our members, as so much history can be found in these letters. We focus on Sherlock Holmes, but when you consider how varied our interests are combined with the untold and often unknown circles in which our members move,

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## ❧ For the Sake of the Trust ❧

The Trust is a special part of the Baker Street Irregulars, the literary society dedicated to the study of Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson. The Trust is designed to collect, archive, and preserve historical documents for the study of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson, the Victorian world, and the individuals and organizations like the BSI that have devoted themselves to such studies. The Trust has a special interest in preserving materials related to the history of the BSI, its members, and friends.

The Trust archive is located in the Houghton Library at Harvard University, in Cambridge, Massachusetts. The archival material may be used by any qualified Sherlockian, subject to the normal rules and regulations of the library.

**Monetary donations** should be sent to:

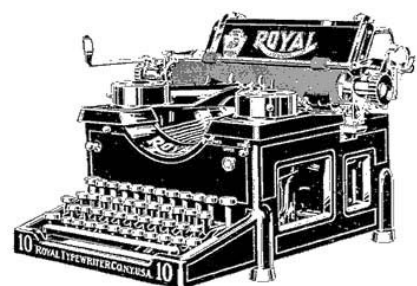
**Leslie S. Klinger, BSI**  
10866 Wilshire Boulevard, Suite # 1500  
Los Angeles, CA 90024

If the financial donation is in honor of someone, please indicate the appropriate name.

If you are passing along a contribution from a third party, please include the name and address of the donor so that we can acknowledge the donation with a thank-you letter from the BSI Trust.

Questions regarding **material contributions** to the archives should be directed to:

**Thomas J. Francis, BSI**  
43 Mann Hill Road  
Scituate, MA 02066-2110



## From the Chair —continued from previous page

the correspondence often becomes valuable to world history as well as the history of The Baker Street Irregulars. This has been proven true in the early material we have acquired. Several scholars have been able to glean material of a non-Sherlockian nature from the Trust Archives.

We, and even more so our families, often think the papers we leave behind are worthless and can be thrown out. We have no idea how much history has already been lost that way. This is a plea to make sure that your files and correspondence are not lost. Please donate them to the Trust Archives or make arrangements for your heirs to do so. History must be preserved.

Much of what we learn in the obituaries is a surprise to us and even those few things beyond the Sherlockian are limited to what the writer chooses to include in what is usually very limited space. The BSI Trust is attempting to expand on its knowledge of our membership by creating an Oral History. A considerable amount of what makes a member of the BSI interesting does not get codified in papers and correspondence, as they often deal only with the Sherlockian side of the individual's life. What often gets lost are the details of life - youth, education, military service and exploits, hobbies, family background, etc. - the things that make him or her a complete person.

So many of our members are really great raconteurs or just plain interesting to talk to; they have wonderful anecdotes and remarkable stories to tell. This is where the Oral History project can fill the gap. In Andy Solberg's lead article, you will read about the details and background of the project. There have been numerous BSI members who have helped in many ways interviewing people, collecting the data, converting the material into a digital format, identifying key candidates and so forth. I, too, would like to thank them all for their work.

I have one anecdote that shows the growth of the project. The first interview I conducted required me to borrow a tape recorder from my daughter. I had to conduct the interview where there was an electric outlet, test the volume levels, arrange the seat-

ing to accommodate the microphone, and stop the person in mid-anecdote to change the tape.



Tom Francis, BSI

Being a technically challenged person, one time after I stopped the tape I hit the record button, but not hard enough. It wasn't until I got home that I realized that I had lost a half hour of some of the best stories. I had to go back and re-record the missing material.

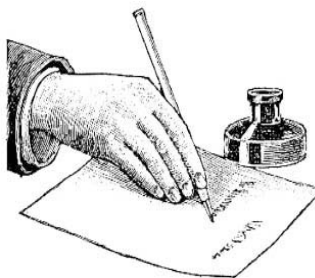
The last time I conducted an interview I was provided with a small digital recorder that picked up all the sounds with no problem. It was capable of storing several hours of material, and when I got home I was able to transfer the data over the web so nothing could get lost. It was so easy even a Luddite can do it. But, of course Sherlockians are not Luddites. They are readers.

And most of them are pretty good talkers as well.



### About this Newsletter

You received this copy of *For the Sake of the Trust: The Baker Street Irregulars Trust Newsletter* because you are on the mailing list of *The Baker Street Journal* or are a member of the Baker Street Irregulars. If you are not interested in receiving further issues, or have any comments or suggestions, please contact:



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Or send e-mail to:  
**editor@bsitrust.org**

You can access links, current events, and back-issues of the newsletter any time at our website:

**www.bsitrust.org**

## Tell Us a Story... *—continued from Page 1*

We spoke about his law practice, his military career, and his involvement with both the Maryland Historical Society and the Jewish Historical Society. We discussed Sherlockians he had met and his memories of the BSI dinners during the 1960s. (Phil was invested in 1969.) We even talked about his father, a local personality who ran a newsstand at which all Baltimore politicians were regulars.

Throughout the interview, I kept worrying about the tape recorder and whether it was capturing all of Phil's fascinating history. I had brought three cassette tapes, and worried each time I turned a tape over or changed tapes that I would mess it up. (It all went fine, but worrying about technology is a tradition in oral histories.) When I was done, I packed the tapes off to Don Terras who had the equipment to convert them to digital format so that they could be stored on CDs. Don asked me to do a couple more interviews, which I was happy to do. Each was delightful in its own way, providing new information and insights.

Alas, my interview with Phil Sherman turned out to be even more poignant. Though he was perfectly healthy when we did the interview, within the year, Phil had passed away. That's why we have to make sure that we can get these reminiscences while we can. All of us are aging, and no one knows for sure what even the short-term future holds.

In late 2009, I received a telephone call from Mike Whelan. After having run the Oral History Project for years, Don had found that his work commitments were imposing on his ability to meet his own standards and, to his regret, he had to relinquish leadership of the Project. Mike asked if I would be willing to take over. Why in God's name he thought that I would be a good choice to replace Don, I don't know. I knew of at least two salient deficiencies: I didn't know everyone, and I didn't have the technical abilities (neither personal skills nor equipment) that Don had.

So I told Mike that I would take the job under two conditions. One, I could put together a committee comprised of people who would make up for my deficiencies; and two, the BSI would purchase easy-to-use, digital voice recorders that could be sent to the interviewers. Mike agreed, and I sought out three superlative people for my committee. In addition to being a good friend, Marsha Pollock is a great Sherlockian, knows almost everyone, and lives on the West Coast. Bill Vande Water and I have had many long talks about the technical glitches at CBS over the years. Bill's knowledge, skills, and equipment would be critical



Andy Solberg, BSI

to the Project. Peter Blau actually does know everyone, both in the US and around the world. In addition, Peter has offered a wealth of ideas over the years. All three kindly agreed to assist me. (Mike agreed to serve as an ex-officio member, participating in conference calls whenever he could.)

Since then, we have built on the solid foundation that Don Terras established. Though some of the committee members have performed interviews themselves, the majority have been performed by local BSIs whom we have contacted, just as Don had contacted me about Phil Sherman. But because I enjoy them

so much, I have not relinquished the opportunity to interview BSIs who live in the Baltimore/Washington area. One of those was Ralph Earle, former Chief Negotiator for the US on the SALT II treaty (and fellow Half-Pay Club member). Who in their right mind would pass up the opportunity to interview Ralph?

To date our primary focus has been on interviewing as many BSIs as we can who were invested before 1970. Not surprisingly, not all of the interviews have occurred as planned. One BSI member passed away between the initial contact and the interview date. Several others have demurred for personal reasons, primarily ill health. While perfectly understandable, this is still unfortunate: every BSI who does not get interviewed takes with him a vessel full of unique vignettes, opinions, humorous stories, explanations about how he came to the BSI, and how he became so accomplished in his non-Sherlockian life. To make matters worse, he may also leave behind a trove of valuable BSI-related documents, mate-

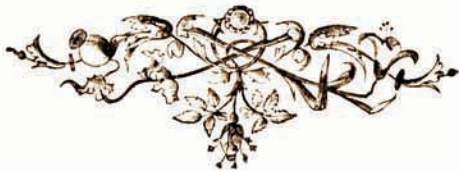
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## Tell Us a Story... —continued from previous page

rial which his family may see as just old papers needing to be disposed of. To help prevent that from happening, we have added the following to the standard list of questions: "Please remember that the BSI Trust is collecting all old correspondence and other BSI-related ephemera. Please see the attached sheet and consider donating your BSI-related materials to the BSI Trust."

I am pleased to report that the response has been overwhelmingly positive, including several immediate submissions of papers to the interviewer. As we continue to collect these personal histories, we learn some surprising things about our own history. We hear varying perspectives on the early years vs. the current BSI. We hear additional anecdotes about the picketing that resulted in the founding of the Adventuresses. And we hear more reminiscences of memorable Sherlockian personalities.

So - if like Don Terras did to me five years ago - I give you a call and ask you who would be a good person to interview you, or whether you would be interested in interviewing someone else, please help me - and the BSI Oral History project - out. I can assure you, your time will not be misspent.



## Andrew Solberg Appointed New Trustee

The Baker Street Irregulars Trust is pleased to announce the appointment of Andrew (Andy) Solberg to its Board of Trustees. For the past two years, Andy has been heading up the Trust's Oral History Project, and doing an outstanding job of it.

In addition to his love of the Canon, Andy brings to the Trust an analytical approach to addressing issues, a forthright manner in presenting his opinions, and - most important - a fresh, unbiased look at what the Trust does and how it does it. The Trust is pleased that Andy has agreed to serve, and looks forward to working with him.



### BSI Trust Officers

Peter E. Blau  
Bob Coghill, *Archivist*  
Thomas Francis, *Chair*  
Leslie S. Klinger, *Secretary-Treasurer*  
Daniel Posnansky  
Constantine Rossakis  
Steven Rothman  
Andrew Solberg  
Bill Vande Water, *Archivist*  
Michael F. Whelan, *Wiggins*

## Gifts to the Treasury

The following list of highly-valued donors to The Baker Street Irregulars Trust covers the period from December of 2010 through December of 2011. The BSI Trust is deeply grateful to all Irregulars and friends whose names appear below for their generous and frequently long-standing support. We would also like to extend a special - and especially sincere - apology to Don Izban, whose name was inadvertently omitted from the list of donors published in the Fall, 2011 issue. Likewise for the Switter Axland Foundation of Salt Lake City.

<b>Gordon Adelman</b>	<b>Pj Doyle</b>	<b>Michael Kean</b>	<b>Jennie Paton</b>	<b>Joel Schwartz</b>
<b>Curtis Armstrong</b>	<b>Mickey Fromkin</b>	<b>Francine Kitts</b>	<b>Marsha Pollak</b>	<b>Paul Singleton</b>
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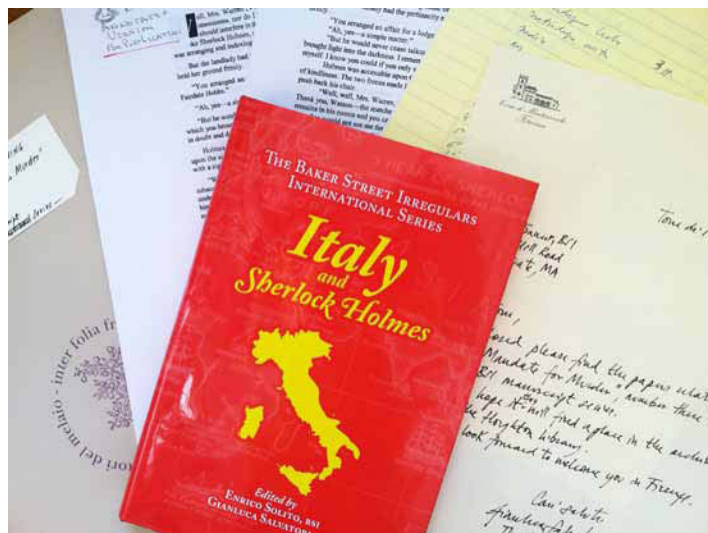
## Added to the Archives

The following material donations have been received since the publication of the Fall, 2011 newsletter.

- From Raymond de Groat, the Raymond de Groat files and correspondence. (Obtained by Marsha Pollak when she interviewed him for the oral history project.)
- From Don Hobbs, back-up materials from his interviews of Daniel Griffin and Bernth Lindfors for the Oral History Project.
- From Les Klinger, manuscript for "The Grand Game."
- From Jerry Margolin, the catalogue of the J. Margolin Sherlock Holmes Collection.
- From Jan C. Prager, a serious scientific article regarding a "life form" found at the Reichenbach Falls. Also, a newspaper story about the article, and the correspondence between Jan Prager and Isaac Asimov humorously discussing it.
- From Gianluca Salvatori, manuscript materials for "Mandate for Murder." (see image right)
- From Dick Sveum (representing the University of Minnesota), a collection of pamphlets and papers relating primarily to John Bennett Shaw.

And from the 2011 BSI Birthday Weekend, Paul Singleton has collected the following items:

- Susan Rice's toast to The Woman.
- Pj Doyle's toast to Mrs. Hudson.
- Lynn Walker's toast to Mycroft.
- Roy Pilot's toast to the Second Mrs. Watson.
- Mike Homer's toast to Sherlock Holmes.
- The text of John Linsenmeyer's presentation "Knox and After: 1911-2011, A Century of Scholarship."
- The text of Sarah Montague, Andrew Joffe, and Paul Singleton's comedy sketch about the spiritual meeting of Arthur Conan Doyle and Dorothy L. Sayers.
- The text of James Zych's presentation "How Moriarty Survived Reichenbach Falls." (winner of the 2010 BSI Essay Contest)
- The video of Les Klinger's interview with Robert Downey, Jr.
- Nick Utechin's toast to an Old Sherlockian (Ronald Knox).
- The text of Francine Kitts' annual rendition of "Standing on the Terrace."
- The text of Betsy and Al Rosenblatt's annual rendition of "The Year in Sherlockian Verse."
- In addition, Paul collected Betsy and Al Rosenblatt's renditions of "The Year in Sherlockian Verse" from 1998, 2002, 2004, and 2009.



The BSI Publication "Italy and Sherlock Holmes" with the manuscript. Book donated anonymously and manuscript donated by Gianluca Salvatori.

## About Donations to the Trust

The Trust seeks primary materials about the history of the BSI and the Irregulars. These may consist of correspondence, photographic and audio materials, manuscripts of historical documents, biographical material, newspaper clippings, and magazine articles. It can also accept valuable Sherlockian books that can be sold to raise funds for the Trust.

The Trust does not intend to create a collection that duplicates the Sherlock Holmes Collection at the University of Minnesota or the Arthur Conan Doyle Collection of the Toronto Metropolitan Reference Library, and so does not actively seek editions of the Canon or scholarly works unless the material has a direct bearing on the history of the BSI or the Irregulars.

The Trust is a 501(c)(3) organization, and contributions are tax-deductible under Section 170 of the Internal Revenue Service Code.



To deduct a non-cash donation of \$5,000 or more, the owner must arrange and pay for a qualified appraisal. Contributions of \$250 or more will be publicly acknowledged; for non-cash items, however, tax regulations prohibit the Trust from acknowledging the dollar value of the donation in this newsletter or The Baker Street Journal.

The initial step in making a donation is to contact one of the trustees. You can find contact information on the Baker Street Irregulars Trust website: [www.bsitrust.org](http://www.bsitrust.org).

# A Collector Recollects

BY VINCENT (VINNIE) BROSNAN, BSI

Once I had in my possession a letter from Edgar Smith addressed to Lisa McGaw, the lady who initiated the Gillette luncheons. She wanted to find out how Chris Morley came to pick January 6th as the date to celebrate Sherlock Holmes' birthday and set the Irregulars' dinner. Surely, I thought, here is a luminous letter, one of substantive value. Consequently I listed it for \$500. No one charged me with going over the top and further to report, there were no takers. It must have been providence that constrained the buyers and allowed me to retain that letter. Subsequently, I revised my thoughts and concluded within the grand scheme of things; i.e., the historical context of the BSI, that this letter was in fact, for Irregulars, priceless. It demanded to be preserved, saved, and placed where it could do the most good.

About this time our Wiggins, Mike Whelan, was seriously considering setting up a home for letters like mine. This was to evolve into an undertaking with major consequences and developed into the BSI Trust, located at the Houghton Library at Harvard. Naturally, we all appreciate letters by Morley and Starrett, but only a few of us can boast of owning such treasures. No matter, the salient point

to remember is that the Trust is vitally interested in your papers and correspondence. They urge: do not toss anything away without connecting first with someone in the Trust. What you might be thinking of disposing of may be more useful than you imagine. An aspiration of the Trust is to create a strong awareness of its needs and its goals. This means a readiness of members to discover how they might contribute, and raises the question for each person as to the right time to contact the Trust. Naturally, this will be entirely dependent upon individual circumstances.

For example, I am a collector, and collectors, as you know, are a jealous lot. I love poring over my accumulation. It gives me such pleasure that, frankly, it's not easy to give up – that is for right now. But, I shall not wait too long because I want to make sure that what I spent a lifetime gathering is put in safekeeping and will not only not be lost, but serve the Irregulars for years to come. For me, the Trust is much more than just an adjunct to the Irregulars – it represents all in one, its past, present, and future, the very heart of our organization, and so requires the deference of serious consideration of all.



## The Cardinal Points

BY MARSHALL S. BERDAN, BSI



Marshall S. Berdan, BSI

Astute Sherlockian that you are, gentle reader, you have do doubt deduced that the theme of this issue of the BSI Trust Newsletter is the Trust's Oral History Project, a topic made all the more apropos by the fact that the Project's coordinator, Andy Solberg, was recently appointed to the Trust's Board of Directors. In his lead article - an artful and illustrative work of oral history itself - Andy brings us up-to-date on the Project and his own involvement in it, from recruited volunteer to steward. Tom Francis contributes his own perspective - and involvement - in this increasingly important aspect of the Trust's work in his regular "From the Chair" column. Suffice it to say, every BSI has his or her own unique and interesting story to tell, and sooner or later, the Oral History Project is going to ask you to sit and deliver.

In the meantime, the Trust marches on this spring with its other work: collecting archival material, receiving donations, and soliciting your ongoing assistance in both, with this issue's guest appeal coming from the pen of Los Angeles-area book dealer Vinnie Brosnan. And speaking of angels and the City of Lights, Camera, Action, let me conclude by reminding you again of this coming Labor Day Weekend's BSI-sponsored symposium "Sherlock Holmes: Behind the Canonical Screen," to be held on the campus of UCLA. As they are wont to say out there in Tinseltown, it's going to be big – really big. And that's a wrap. Cut! Print!

## BSI Trust Benefactor's Medal Awarded to Glen Miranker

AT THE BSI DINNER ON FRIDAY, JANUARY 13, 2012, MIKE WHELAN PRESENTED THE INUAGURAL BSI TRUST BENEFACITOR'S MEDAL TO GLEN MIRANKER. THE TEXT OF MIKE'S REMARKS FOLLOWS BELOW:

"There are some simply wonderful letters in the BSI Archive at Harvard University. For example, this June 24, 1942 letter from Christopher Morley to Edgar Smith which actually portends the establishment of the BSI Trust Archive: "...as supreme archivist you might like to file the enclosed. D. Pearson's letter is amusing. . ."

Fortuitously, Smith did take this role seriously, retaining his correspondence with Morley, his own meeting minutes, and other important BSI memorabilia. But years after his death, Smith's files were in serious danger of ending up in the same trash fodder in which most of the first generation of valuable Irregulars' material ended up. Marvin Epstein, BSI, rescued the Smith files for posterity, and Glen Miranker rescued them (from the standpoint of the BSI Trust) for the Baker Street Irregular Archives at Harvard's Houghton Library. Along with Costa Rossakis, Glen was the BSI Trust's founding co-chair. It would be impossible to measure his contributions to the Trust and to the BSI in establishing the foundation of all that has followed.

Tonight we salute Glen, and bestow upon him the BSI Trust's first Benefactor's Medal for both his leadership and his gifts, which have been the twin cornerstones of our societal collection. Glen also coined the name of our newsletter, "For the Sake of the Trust," which remains the "catch phrase" for all of the Trust's activities and objectives. This award is crowned with a small scroll containing those words, and from which hangs the new logo of the BSI, which you will also find on the spine of all BSI books. The inscription reads: "Glen S. Miranker, first recipient of the BSI Trust Benefactor's Medal. With appreciation for your leadership and gratitude for your generosity."

## Accardo Invested

At January's BSI dinner, Peter X. Accardo, The Houghton Library's Program Coordinator and a frequent contributor to this newsletter, received his shilling and the titular investiture of "Thornycroft Huxtable." Congratulations, Peter.

## Trade-off in Toronto

During the course of the Annual General Meeting of the Friends of the Arthur Conan Doyle Society, held during the "Study in Scandal" symposium in Toronto in October, Peter E. Blau, representing the Baker Street Irregulars Trust, and Peggy Perdue, representing the Arthur Conan Doyle Collection, carried out a reciprocal exchange of books and other archival material. While he had the floor, Peter explained the mission of the Trust and saluted its collegial and productive working relationship with both the Arthur Conan Doyle Collection and the Toronto Public Library.

## "And now, our feature presentation..."

SHERLOCK HOLMES: BEHIND THE CANONICAL SCREEN, LOS ANGELES, CA: AUGUST 31 - SEPTEMBER 3, 2012

Sherlock Holmes has dominated the motion picture screen for more than 100 years. As the most filmed personality ever, each generation's image of Holmes uniquely combines Victorian and contemporary elements. Because Watson's classic tales were intended for the print medium, filmmakers always face unusual challenges in adapting them to the screen. In only the third conference ever sponsored by The Baker Street Irregulars, these challenges and the history of Sherlockian film will be explored by a diverse group of academic and amateur scholars over the Labor Day Weekend.



Image by Jerry Stratton used with the kind permission of Carolyn & Joel Senter, [www.sherlock-holmes.com](http://www.sherlock-holmes.com).

"Sherlock Holmes: Behind the Canonical Screen" is co-sponsored by the UCLA School of Theater, Film & Television and will take place from Friday, August 31, 2012, through Monday, September 3, 2012, at the James Bridges Theatre on the campus of UCLA. An international group of featured speakers includes Kimiko Akita, Curtis Armstrong, Philip Carli, Ron Clements, S. E. Dahlinger, Tony Earnshaw, Mario Faraone, Amanda Field, Sir Christopher Frayling, Jan-Christopher Horak, Kevin L. Jones, Jonathan Kirsch, John Landis, Kristopher Mecholsky, Russell Merritt, Nicholas Meyer, John Musker, Deborah Nadoolman, Scott Allen Nollen, Ashley D. Polasek, Betsy Rosenblatt, and Paul Singleton. In addition, the program will feature rare film clips, historical looks at the major and minor films and players, and consideration of the special problems of producing, writing, directing, costuming, and acting in Sherlockian films.

Registration materials and information about accommodations are available at the Irregulars' website, [www.bakerstreet-journal.com](http://www.bakerstreet-journal.com). You will find the conference listed under "News".